



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 9 January 1969

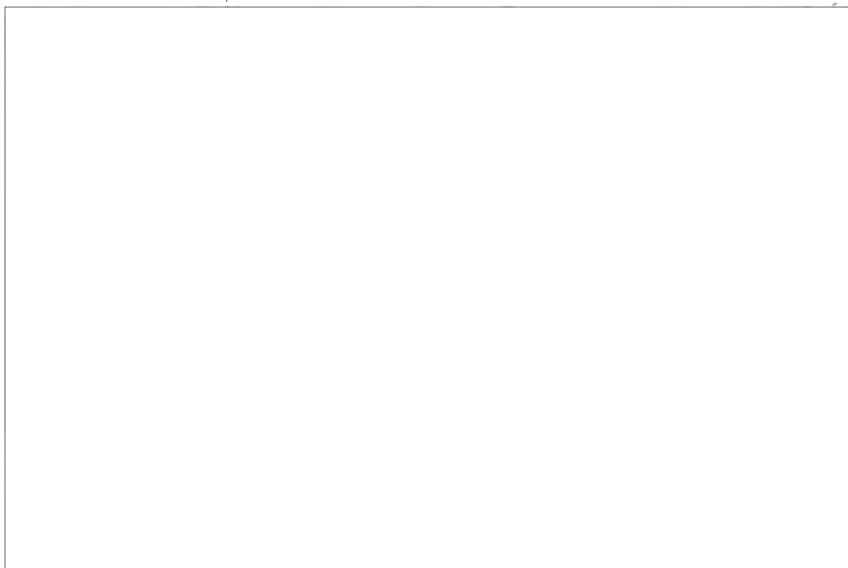


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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
9 JANUARY 1969

1. Middle East

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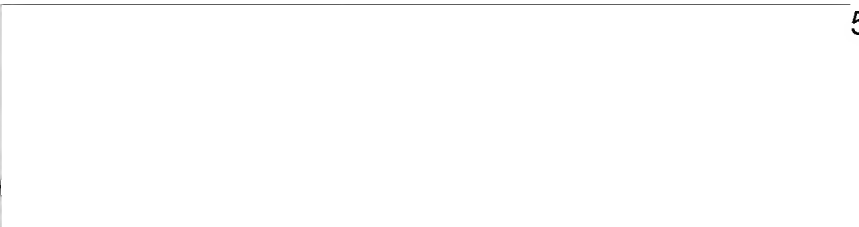
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In Beirut, President Hilu has asked Rashid Karami to form a new government following Prime Minister Yafi's resignation yesterday. Karami, of the same political stripe, is expected to put together a national coalition cabinet.

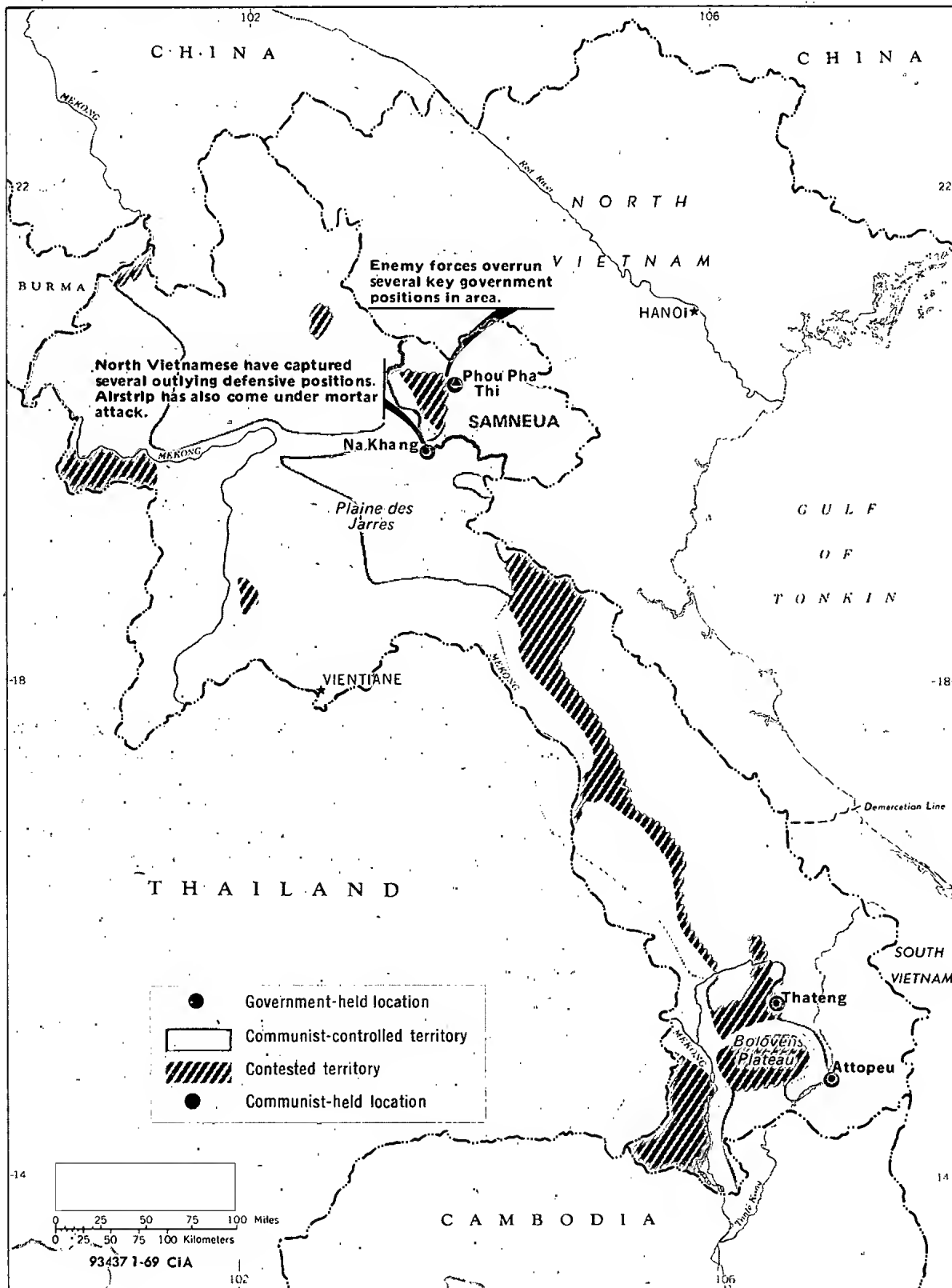
2. West Germany

Bonn wants another round of talks with Washington about the Nonproliferation Treaty. Behind this is the Germans' hope to get some security concession from the Soviets--either directly or through the US--in exchange for Bonn's signature. Conservative critics of the treaty have been highly vocal in demanding something specific along this line. Finance Minister Strauss also recently urged negotiation of unresolved problems with the new US administration.

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LAOS: Current Situation

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3. Israel

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4. Laos

Stiffened by fresh North Vietnamese troops, the Communists have turned the tables on government forces in northern Laos. In the Phou Pha Thi area they have overrun several key government positions and now occupy the crest of the strategic outpost itself.

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Not far to the southwest, enemy troops are moving slowly against the key guerrilla base of Na Khang. Its airstrip, vital to support of the base, has also come under mortar attack in recent days.

Fighting has slackened in southern Laos following the Communists' costly setback at Thateng. The threat from large numbers of North Vietnamese troops still in the area remains, however.

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5. Panama

There may be more student demonstrations today. Ceremonies marking the anti-US riots of 1964 are planned

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The Guard can be expected to react firmly to any trouble, as it did against last month's protest march over military rule.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of US
Political Attitudes



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

9 January 1969

I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Hanoi's Propaganda Preparations for a New Offensive: The army's official newspaper has been putting special editorial emphasis for the past two months on expansion and improvement of the armed forces. This propaganda campaign anticipates the increased flow of men and supplies to the south, thus getting into position for large-scale offensives early this year.

An 8 December article critical of past performance calls for close study of Communist military efforts in South Vietnam in order to be ready for the "new phase" in the war. The text implies that many commanders were pulled out of combat in South Vietnam to undergo a crash training program designed to improve their skills and to prepare for an early return to battle. It characterized the present time as one of "urgent preparations" for offensive activity in the near future.

* * *

Popular Opposition to the War: On 29 November the army paper implied that new programs were under way for conscription of civilians into war support activities in North Vietnam and for actual service in the armed forces. This editorial said many units had "mobilized the people" for "developing the armed forces," and called upon the remainder to respond to the "new phase" in the war by overcoming civilian opposition to the intensified military draft. The same editorial admitted there had been a letdown in civilian morale after the bombing halt and that the public was slow to respond to new demands for a war effort. Army personnel were called on to counter popular resentment and to help muster support. Troops deployed into new areas were asked to help minimize tensions among the people, who were sometimes unfriendly.

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Such a frank discussion of morale problems is distinctly unusual and opens the possibility that Hanoi is becoming concerned. The fact that the regime called on the army for assistance in manipulating popular attitudes is also unusual. In addition, the newspaper's handling of popular opposition to the war implies that it is more widespread than reports from North Vietnamese prisoners have indicated.

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Vinh Harbor in Bad Shape: The port is badly silted, and the recent unloading of the Marianthi, of Cypriot registry, was delayed. The ship carried 2,200 tons of rice from Haiphong to Vinh, reportedly because authorities preferred to conserve the gasoline which would have been expended by a truck convoy. The Marianthi was the first Free World - flag vessel to call at Vinh since 1965.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

There is nothing of significance to report today.

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